

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KHARTO 02441 221254Z
ACTION ORM-02

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-13 ISO-00 DHA-02 VO-03 SCA-01
CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 /039 W
-----035172 221931Z /43

R 221134Z JUL 77
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4920
INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 2441

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, SU, ET
SUBJECT: ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN SUDAN

REF: STATE 154536 (NOTAL)

1. EMBASSY HINDERED IN ITS ABILITY TO REPLY TO DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR INFO ON CONDITIONS AT ETHIOPIAN REFUGEE CAMPS IN SUDAN BECAUSE NO ONE IN EMBASSY HAS HAD OPPORTUNITY VISIT ANY CAMPS. NOR DOES PROSPECT OF VISIT IN NEAR FUTURE APPEAR LIKELY. AS DEPT AWARE, PERMISSION FOR DEPTOFF METTSON TO GO TO SUCH A CAMP DURING HIS RECENT VISIT TO SUDAN WAS DENIED. SECURITY SITUATION WHICH PROMPTED DENIAL LIKELY TO REMAIN DELICATE FOR SOME TIME TO COME. THEREFORE, OUR INFO ON SITUATION IN CAPMS IS SECOND HAND.

2. MOREOVER, INFO AVAILABLE TO US IS SOMEWHAT CONTRADICTORY. EMBASSY FSL WHO RECENTLY VISITED HIS HOME TOWN OF KASSALA ACKNOWLEDGED GROWING NUMBER OF REFUGEES, BUT HE INDICATED THAT MANY IF NOT MOST WERE WORKING. HE SAID MANY WERE NOT RPT NOT POOR AND HAD BROUGHT BELONGINGS INCLUDING IN SOME CASES AUTOMOBILES WITH THEM. THOUGH DISRUPTED, THEY WERE GRADUALLY SETTLING DOWN, EITHER IN KASSALA AREA, OR
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BY MOVING ON TO KHARTOUM AREA. SIMILARLY, IN OUR CONVERSATIONS WITH UNHCR AND SUDANGOV REPS HERE WE NEVER GAINED IMPRESSION THAT ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES WERE UNDER EXTREME HARDSHIPS OR THAT CAMPS WERE SEETING WITH DISCONTENT.

3. ON OTHER HAND, HOWEVER, IT ALSO APPEARS CERTAIN THAT OBJECTIVE CONDITIONS AT REFUGEE CAMPS PROBABLY GRIM BY OUR

STANDARDS. SUDANGOV OFFICIALS NOTE THAT ONLY TWO HOSPITALS (IN GEDAREF AND KASSALA) WHICH MUST ALSO SERVE LOCAL POPULACE ARE AVAILABLE TO WELL OVER 100,000 REFUGEES. SUDANGOV FEARS OUTBREAK OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES. STANDARD OF LIVING FOR SUDANESE IN REGION IS QUITE LOW WITH MINIMAL SERVICES, AND IT THEREFORE SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY THAT CIRCUMSTANCES FOR REFUGEES ANY BETTER. UNHCR REP KOZOLWSKI HAS INDICATED NEED TO SETTLE REFUGEES AS FARMERS, AND HE SAID PROCESS HAS BEGUN. THERE HAVE BEEN SOME REPORTS OF ANTAGONISM BETWEEN REFUGEES AND LOCAL POPULACE, BUT WE NOT ABLE SAY HOW BAD THIS PROBLEM IS.

4. AS FIGHTING INTENSIFIES IN ETHIOPIA APPEARS LIKELY THAT ADDITIONAL HUNDREDS, IF NOT THOUSANDS, OF REFUGEES WILL ENTER SUDAN. SUDANGOV AND UNHCR APPEAR TO BE MAKING CONSCIENTIOUS AND AT LEAST PARTIALLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORT COMBAT BIGGEST REFUGEE PROBLEM IN AFRICA. HOWEVER, INEVITABLY VERY LOW LEVEL OF DEVELOPMENT IN SUDAN WILL SEVERELY LIMIT HOW MUCH CAN BE DONE EVEN WITH MOST FORTHCOMING ATTITUDE ON PART OF SUDANGOV. SUBJECTIVELY, ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES WITH WHOM WE COME IN CONTACT, APPEAR TO WANT TO LEAVE SUDAN IF POSSIBLE ALTHOUGH, FOR NOW AT LEAST, THEY PREFER IT TO ETHIOPIA ITSELF TO WHICH MOST WOULD PROBABLY RETURN IF CONDITIONS WOULD EVER ALLOW.

5. WITH REGARD TO DEPT'S SPECIFIC QUESTION PARA 4 REFTEL
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RE WHETHER ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES SHOULD BE RETURNED TO SUDAN, EMBASSY RELUCTANT MAKE FINAL RECOMMENDATION WITHOUT KNOWING UNHCR'S VIEWS. WE KNOW OF NO RPT NO POLITICAL PRESSURES WHICH ARE APPLIED BY SUDANGOV UNIQUELY AGAINST ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES. SUDANGOV WILL ACCEPT THEM AND THEY CAN LIVE HERE SUBJECT ONLY TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HARDSHIPS EVERYONE HAS TO FACE. AS FOR CONDITIONS OF CAMPS THEY PROBABLY ARE QUOTE DEPLORABLE UNQUOTE OBJECTIVELY SPEAKING, BUT WE WONDER WHETHER THEY ARE SIGNIFICANTLY WORSE THAN CONDITIONS GENERALLY IN EASTERN SUDAN OR IN ETHIOPIA ITSELF. BERGUS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: LIVING CONDITIONS, REFUGEE CAMPS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 22-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KHARTO02441
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770262-0857
Format: TEL
From: KHARTOUM
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770730/aaaaazir.tel
Line Count: 105
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: edd25b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ORM
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 154536
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1781175
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ETHIOPIAN REFUGEES IN SUDAN
TAGS: SREF, SU, ET
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/edd25b65-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009